

New Cthulhu fiction! Supernatural skullduggery runs amok in this continuing series of writings culled from the archives of occult investigator Phillip Shandler, as transcribed by *Call of Cthulhu* author Monte Cook.

SHANDLER INVESTIGATIONS



Phillip Shandler
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March 20, 1930

Dear Thomas,

I've just settled in a little town called Fairfield, Wyoming. I had to take the train into Casper and then hitched a ride here. It's cold here. Not so much the temperature, but the wind. It seems like it's always blowing.

This is the nearest town, as far as my research shows, to where Lastbridge once stood. If you remember, Lastbridge is where Simon Carlisle led a group of religious folk who called themselves the Fellowship of the Risen God. Originally from Boston, Carlisle and his people were driven out for strange and terrible acts in the name of their faith.

However, Lastbridge was destroyed in a terrible storm almost 90 years ago. Although I have some theories to the contrary. And all my theories involve the entity known as Nyarlathotep.

But, I'm tired from my journey. I wanted to get this off right away because I said that I would contact you when I arrived. I was also wondering if you could possibly send me your notes that you made reading the *Pnakotic Manuscripts*. I know you probably don't want to part with the book itself, but I do have a lot of questions and I think that book might provide the answers.

I will write again soon.

Sincerely,

Philip

April 1, 1930

Dear Thomas,

Thank you for your package. It arrived today. I was very surprised that you actually sent your copy of the *Pnakotic Manuscripts*. I thought you would want to hold on to that. Very generous of you, my friend. I will make sure to keep it safe and in good condition.

As I mentioned in my last letter, the thing to really get used to out here is the wind. It just blows and blows. Not like the East Coast, I assure you. Because of the wind, when you look out across the plains, toward the mountains, it's as though everything is always in motion. The loose brush and the dust march across the countryside, seeming to disappear off into the hills somewhere. At night it can be disconcerting. But I suppose you get used to it.

In the past week and half I've been asking around about the little town of Lastbridge and Simon Carlisle's people. For the most part, local records about Lastbridge seem to be almost as sketchy as the information I could find back home. It seems that there were about 150 settlers. They arrived in Wyoming 1842, after a trip that took them almost a full year to make. (Apparently, they lingered for a few months in Missouri—do you think there's any chance you could find out something about that?)

They settled on the banks of the Powder River, near what people at the time referred to as the last bridge—hence the name. The people were quiet and kept to themselves. They had very little contact with any of the surrounding communities. Three years later, in a year memorable for its terrible storms, Lastbridge was hit by not one but three tornadoes, or, as people around here say, twisters. All at once. The destruction was so severe that all that was left of the town was a few scraps of lumber and an old pot. Everything, including the people, was gone.

I think it's a key point of investigation that no bodies were found. You see, when I spoke to "Simon" on the train, he referred to Nyarlathotep as "The Destroyer and Abductor of Lastbridge." It's the "abductor" part of that statement that interests me. I don't think that

they were all killed. I think that they left, or rather, were taken away.

I couldn't find out more than that, though. It was just too long ago, it seems, and no one was really keeping much in the way of records at the time. I was about to figure I'd learned all I could in Fairfield, and so I rented a farmer's truck and drove out to the site myself. I did that for two days straight, but I couldn't find anything. I'm not even sure if I actually even found the actual site. There's just nothing left. I was beginning to think I'd come out here for nothing.

That was before I met an old man named Jacob Chesterfield.

Jacob is an ancient gent who seems to spend most of his time sitting outside the entrance to the local feed store, now that the weather is a bit warmer. He wears denim overalls and a flannel shirt and chews on a corn cob pipe with only a few remaining teeth. His face seems collapsed, with his eyes and nose almost forming a horizontal line above his wide mouth. An interesting old guy, let me tell you.

Jacob claims that he was a small boy when Lastbridge was destroyed. That would make him, well, about as old as he looks, so I believe him.

"Folks talked about that storm for years to come," Jacob told me. "Worst storm anyone's every seen 'fore or since. Twisters carved up the ground as they went, and they all met in old Lastbridge. More skittish folks said they could hear the screams all the way here in Fairfield. Others said it wasn't just the people in Lastbridge that they heard screaming, but something in the storm itself."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't hold with no stories like that, young feller. I ain't the one to ask about that. These parts have got their own share of ghost stories is all."

"Really?"

"Yep, but not like some ghost stories you might hear."

I urged him to go on.

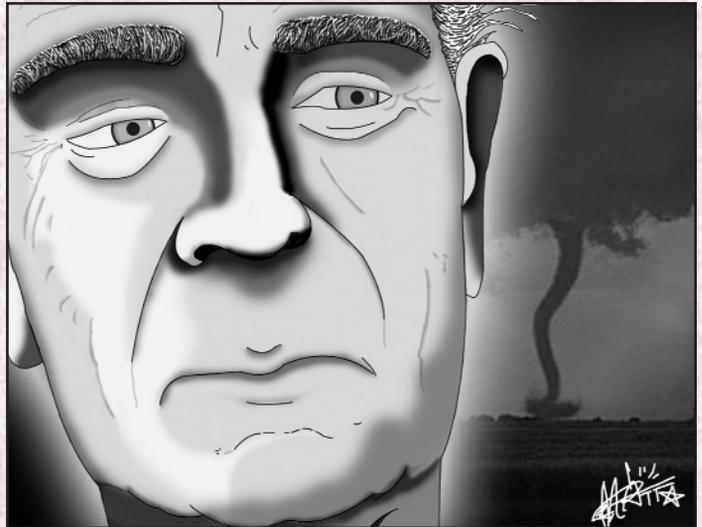
"Like I say, I ain't a ghost story teller. But tales around here come in two kinds. One with a terrible feller made of the dark of night himself. The other with not one but a whole crowd of ghosts that travel cross the land."

"A crowd of ghosts. You mean like a whole town. Or a congregation?"

He looked at me in the eye like he suddenly had some newfound respect. But he just gave me a crooked smile and a bit of a wink.

I asked him about the people of Lastbridge and Simon Carlisle. He didn't seem to remember too much. He was too young, and only knew what people said about them after they were gone.

Jacob said that Simon Carlisle was a minister who preached of nothing but the Apocalypse.



Carlisle spoke of the hand of god reaching down and taking the believers away. I don't think he was talking about any Christian god, here, and I suspect that Jacob thinks the same thing. Based on what I've learned before, and tipped by Jacob's mention of a man "made of the dark of night," I think he was talking about Nyarlathotep. If I'm right, Carlisle was readying his flock to be taken away before their town was taken. Except that I have no idea where they might have been taken, or how such a thing could be real. But it might explain how Simon Carlisle, who should be dead—if not in the storm of old age—could contact me not once but twice.

The old man mentioned a book that Simon had—a black leatherbound tome that most people assumed was a bible. However, Jacob said that it was no such thing. He named the book, and while I've heard it before, I can't remember where. He called it the *Necronomicon*. Ever heard of it?

He told me one more thing. He said that when people investigated the site where Lastbridge stood, while the whole town was gone, he said that the converging tornados had formed an odd pattern on the ground. People said that, if you were able to see it from high above, it would have seemed to be a huge eye. An eye with three lobes.

I'm going to look to see if that has any meaning in the book you sent. I look forward to hearing from you soon, Thomas, and to get your thoughts on some of this. With some directions from Jacob, I am going to go out to find the site again. I'll be here for another week, I'm sure. I'm sure I'll be used to the wind by then.

Sincerely,

Phillip